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G FOR U/S DOBRIANSKY
G FOR ANNE CARSON
G/DRL/IRF FOR JACK CRODDY AND NANCY HEWETT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN WILL NOT RESOLVE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ISSUE
THIS LEGISLATURE

REF: MADRID 2029

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: After high-level engagement with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Economy and Finance, it is clear that Spain will not act to extend full benefits and privileges to the Church of Latter Day Saints, the Buddhists, and the Jehovah's witnesses prior to the March 2008 national elections. We plan to pursue the issue with both the GOS and the opposition Popular Party (PP) prior to the elections, laying down markers that this will be one of our top bilateral priorities of 2008, whichever party should win. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On December 5, Ambassador Aguirre spoke with Foreign Minister Moratinos again about the issue of extending full benefits and privileges to the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS), the Buddhists, and the Jehovah's Witnesses in Spain, putting them on a level playing field with the four major religions in Spain - Roman Catholicism, Islam, Protestantism, and Judaism. Moratinos said that the matter was with the Ministry of Treasury and would require that Ministry's approval to make it into the budgetary process for FY 2008. Without approval from Treasury, a proposed amendment could not be considered in Parliament prior to the adjournment of the current legislature, which will adjourn for all non-budget business on December 20. The next legislature will convene once a new government is formed following the March 2008 national elections.

¶3. (SBU) The DCM called Deputy Justice Minister Julio Perez Hernandez November 20 to discuss the matter. Perez Hernandez told the DCM that he would review the matter very seriously and would see what could be done. As Charge, DCM followed up with a letter to Perez Hernandez on November 21.

¶4. (SBU) The DCM spoke with Deputy Treasury Minister Ocano's chief of staff Mercedes Caballero at Treasury on December 5, as Ocano was unavailable due to final budget negotiations. Caballero informed DCM that to the best of her knowledge, Treasury had not received any instructions from policy makers in Justice or the Council of Ministers to move this legislation forward as a priority. She said that if the GOS were serious about acting on such an amendment, Treasury would have received instructions by this time. She was not aware of any inquiries from Justice, Foreign Affairs or the Council of Ministers into the fiscal implications of such a measure. As such, it was a practical impossibility that such an amendment could be enacted prior to the adjournment of this legislature. The DCM and Caballero did agree to convene an inter-agency group next year to develop the road map for the enactment of such legislation.

¶5. (SBU) We plan to hold follow-up meetings with GOS officials and members of the opposition Partido Popular to

emphasize the importance of this issue to the U.S. and to underscore that this legislation should be high on the agenda of the new Spanish government in 2008.

AGUIRRE